

REPORTER-HERALD

From Devil's Backbone to the Mummy Range, Halloween for the outdoor enthusiast

Spooky-sounding destinations and Creepy Walk in the Woods await

By *Michelle Vendegna* Reporter-Herald Staff Writer POSTED: 10/19/2016 04:57:59 PM MDT



If you go

What: Creepy Walk in the Woods and Kids Walk in the Woods.

When: Creepy Walk, 7 to 11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays through Oct. 29. Kids Walk, noon to 4 p.m. Oct. 29 and 30.

Where: 1750 Savage Road, Loveland.

Cost: \$20.

More info: Go

to creepwalk.com or www.thesavagewoods.com.

The Devil's Backbone looms over west Loveland. It's one of many spooky-sounding destinations for area hikers. (*Christopher Stark / Loveland Reporter-Herald file photo*)

If you want to combine your love of the outdoors with the Halloween season, Northern Colorado has many properly named spots to visit.

Take Devil's Gulch Road outside Estes Park for example or Dead Man Hill Road near Red Feather Lakes. If you dig into the history of Grand Lake, you can find out why Indians called it Spirit Lake.

Look to the Rocky Mountain National Park area west of Loveland and the silhouette of an Egyptian mummy might appear.

The Mummy Range, formerly called White Owls according to "High Country Names" by Louisa Ward Arps and Elinor Eppich Kingery, forms the eerie figure with Mummy Mountain or Hagues Peak seen as the head, Fairchild makes drawn up knees, Ypsilon creates feet, and Chapin and Chiquita are footstools.

"During certain times of light you can absolutely see it bears a resemblance to that," said Kyle Patterson, public information officer for Rocky Mountain National Park. The range is separate from the Continental Divide.

"It's an additional spectacular mountain range," Patterson said.

"It is more remote and to get to some of these summits or areas are a lot longer hike and elevation gain to go along with that," she said. However, that can be a draw for some hikers.

"One of the things that people enjoy is that it is more of challenge to get to these destinations," she said.



Loveland resident John Roberts, left, and his sister Ruth Roberts, visiting from San Francisco, hike together in September 2014 on the trail at Devil's Backbone Open Space. (Steve Stoner / Loveland Reporter-Herald)

Closer to Loveland and little more accessible is Devil's Backbone. The hogback, a narrow ridge of steep slopes, of Dakota sandstone, is located just west of Loveland. The open space area has no admission fee and features 12 miles of trails.

Kitty Wild, a Loveland resident, is from a family of homesteaders who came to Devil's Backbone area in the early 1880s. She still lives on part of the original homestead at the base of the formation on Savage Road.

"I am fourth generation raising my fifth generation," Wild said. She is still amazed at the scenery that surrounds her 50 acres.

"It's all awesome, the beauty, the solitude, the cool history, even the rattlesnakes," she said, but she admitted her favorite is foggy mornings.

Growing up she heard all the folklore and stories: the gold from a robbed stagecoach that is still hidden in the hills or the story of the sheriff who married Alfred Wild Sr.'s wife after Alfred passed, later bitten by a rattlesnake transporting a prisoner. The story says he was so nice to the prisoner that instead of running off, the prisoner made sure the sheriff got back to town.

With the scenery and the folklore, Wild has taken her portion of the land and found ways to let the public enjoy. The area and homestead are now home to a series of events, the for-profit Colorado Medieval Festival and the Christmas Walk in the Woods and the nonprofit Creepy Walk in the Woods and Kids Walk in the Woods. With surrounding businesses like Sylvan Dale Ranch and the reopened Backbone Events Center, the area is becoming a great place for events.



Clouds sit over the Mummy Range west of Estes Park. In the right light, the range of mountains that includes Mummy Mountain, Hagues Peak, Fairchild, Ypsilon, Chapin and Chiquita, form the silhouette of an Egyptian mummy. (*Estes Park Trail-Gazette*)

"We are a unique outdoor festival site," she said.

Right now Wild's property has is transformed it haunted woods featured creepy characters for those ages 11 and above and Grimm fairy tale creatures for kids.

"We do this for the creep factor. There is a little blood and guts, but not about being disgusting," she said and it's cleaned up a bit for the Kids Walk for younger children. Wild said she and the volunteers do it for the amount of fun they have building it and scaring people.

"It's really for the giggles," she said, "it's a hobby that went a little crazy."

Wild is Head Minion No. 43 and marketing director for the events.

The haunted walk has 120 volunteers and for the first year is designated as 501(c)(3) nonprofit. It began as a Boy Scout fundraiser when Wild found the traditional fundraising wasn't working for the troop her sons were in.

The first few years, the event didn't really see any profit and with the flood in 2013, Wild said they were faced with having to rebuild. In 2014, they opened once again.

"We rebuilt and came back with a vengeance," she said, "We were exhausted but it was so much fun and well worth it."

Now, Wild said, they are set to make a profit so proceeds will go toward scholarships for teens who have volunteered and other Northern Colorado community needs.

"There are a lot of worthy causes and we will keep this close to home," she said. The Creepy Walk and Kids Walk have become a family events as Wild sees entire families come out to help.

"They are making memories that you wouldn't get to make anywhere else," she said.

Wild's family is no exception.

"They love it. It's me and my brother and my sister now and my uncle across the street," she said "Just like the volunteers, I have my family down there scaring people."

Creepy Walk in the Woods is 7 to 11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays through Oct. 29. Cost is \$20. Kids Walk in the Woods from noon to 4 p.m. Oct. 29 and 30. Cost is \$5. the location is 1750 Savage Road, Loveland. Go to creepypwalk.com or www.thesavagewoods.com.

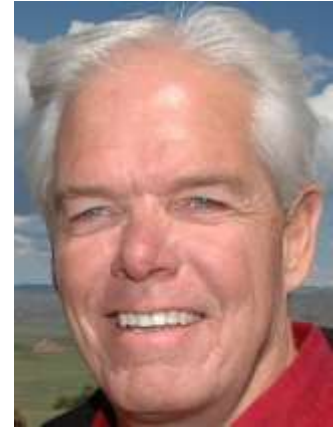


Letter: Thanks for 20 years of funding open spaces

Gary Buffington 10:02 a.m. MDT October 18, 2016

(Photo: Gary Buffington)

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Head out to an open space, natural area, reservoir or trail in Larimer County and you'll find people hiking, boating, biking, fishing, camping and exploring nature. It's why we live here, right?

We have these amazing outdoor places thanks to you, the citizens of Larimer County, who have continually voted in favor of the Help Preserve Open Spaces, quarter-cent sales and use tax. Since 1996, when the tax first started generating funds, Larimer County and its cities and towns have used this funding to conserve special places around our communities.

These open lands provide a myriad of values to everyone in our great county, from wildlife habitat to recreational opportunities to scenic vistas. These lands and the values they hold have been conserved for our enjoyment now and the benefit of future generations to come.

I'm not the only one who feels this strongly about open lands. Voters renewed the Help Preserve Open Spaces tax by an astounding 82 percent in 2014; the tax now won't sunset until 2043.

We all owe a huge debt of gratitude to the small group of citizens who, back in the mid-1990s, had the foresight to place Help Preserve Open Spaces on the ballot. After 20 years, their grit and determination to get the tax passed has undoubtedly enhanced the lives of all of us in Larimer County who enjoy spending time in the great outdoors.

I am also grateful to the dedicated individuals who work for the departments that steward these public resources, as well as our county commissioners, city and town council members and others who support them in managing these resources. It takes a team effort.

Like many of you, I spend time with my family in our local parks, open spaces and natural areas. My wife and I have raised our kids in the outdoors. It's a lifestyle we all share. So, thank you for supporting Help Preserve Open Spaces over the last 20 years. Get outdoors and play!

Learn more: www.larimer.org/openspaces20th

Gary Buffington, director of Larimer County Department of Natural Resources

REPORTER-HERALD

Lions Open Space parking lot to close Oct. 17-Nov. 25

Construction will take place at Lions Open Space starting Monday, Oct. 17, resulting in a temporary closure of the parking area there.

It is expected to reopen Nov. 25.

Lions Open Space, located just south of Laporte, is home to the westernmost portion of the Poudre River Trail. The trail continues west as the Pleasant Valley Trail.

The open space can be accessed by trail during construction.

That trail will remain open during construction, but has been rerouted away from the Cache la Poudre River, according to a Larimer County Department of Natural Resources press release.

Fishing will remain open, except when equipment is in the river.

The temporary closure will allow crews to stabilize the bank of the Poudre River and repair a 20-foot section of the Pleasant Valley Trail that was damaged by flooding.

In addition to the trail repairs, crews will work on the lines of rock in the Poudre River and along the east riverbank and complete revegetation work, such as reseeding and planting shrubs and trees, along the eastern side of the river.

Updates will be posted on Larimer County Department of Natural Resources' website, www.larimer.org/naturalresources.



Temporary closure at Lions Open Space begins Oct. 17

(Photo: 9NEWS)



LARIMER COUNTY - A temporary closure due to construction will begin Oct. 17 at the parking area at Lions Open Space in Larimer County.

Lions Open Space is home to the westernmost portion of the Poudre River Trail, which continues west as the Pleasant Valley Trail.

Pleasant Valley Trail will remain open during construction, but has been rerouted away from Cache la Poudre River.

Visitors can access Lions Open Space from the trail during the construction. Fishing will also be open.

The Lions Open Space parking area is expected to reopen Nov. 25.

Improvements to the area include boulder installation and stabilization of the bank of the Poudre River and repairs to a 20-foot section of the Pleasant Valley Trail after previous flooding events.

5280 [THE DENVER MAGAZINE]

Where the Bison Roam

A unique type of baby boom in northern Colorado bodes well for the future of bison.

BY

- [MEG MCINTYRE](#)
OCTOBER 2016



—Courtesy of John Eisele/CSU Photography

At the start of the 19th century, as many as 60 million bison wandered America, with the majority in Great Plains states such as Colorado. By **the 1890s, though, the country's** population of bison had dwindled to around 400; overhunting had devastated the ancient species. Add **in farmers' efforts to crossbreed the** beasts with cattle, and by 1912 just

one wild herd of genetically pure bison remained, in Yellowstone National Park. Attempts to reintroduce the species were long thwarted by a bacterial disease that caused the bison to miscarry. Then, in 2011, Colorado State University scientists discovered how to remove the bacteria. Almost a year ago, some of the genetically pure bison were relocated to Soapstone Prairie Natural Area and Red Mountain Open Space, north of Fort Collins, and in May six healthy purebred calves were born—the first in the Colorado wilderness in more than a century. Glimpse the majestic creatures in their 1,000-acre enclosure from the west side of Rawhide Flats Road before it closes for the season on November 30. Bring a pair of binoculars, or else it may seem as if the animals have disappeared again.



#NoCoAsk: Is Horsetooth Reservoir getting more campsites?

[Cassa Niedringhaus](#), cniedringhaus@coloradoan.com 4:21 p.m. MDT September 28, 2016



Is it true that additional campsites are being added to the Inlet Bay area of Horsetooth Reservoir?

More than 100 people voted in the first NoCoAsk poll and selected this question.

The short answer: Maybe. Initial proposals indicate as many as 100 campsites are under consideration.



The long answer: About once a decade, the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources updates its master plan. Department leaders are currently in the third phase of a five-phase planning process that began in June to update the master plans for various reservoirs, including Horsetooth Reservoir, which is the third-busiest reservoir in the state.

Seven “new opportunities” were presented to consider for the reservoir at public scoping meetings in August. Among the proposals were 50 new campsites at the Inlet Bay Campground —

25 on the north side and 25 on the south side — and 50 new campsites at the South Bay Campground.

“These are first looks,” Horsetooth district manager Mark Caughlan said. “I can’t emphasize that enough.”

Should new campsites make the cut when the master plan is finalized next spring, their creation would involve dredging the shoreline. All current campsites around the reservoir involved dredging.

Construction workers pulled dirt from the bed of the reservoir and put it on the shore to make a flat surface for the sites.

This serves a dual purpose: It allows for a flat surface on which to camp and makes the shoreline steeper, which makes drops in water levels less noticeable. If new campsites were added around Inlet Bay, the dredging would allow for the marina to stay open longer. Drops in water would affect the docks less if the shorelines were steeper.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is working in conjunction with the county to develop a resource management plan and an environmental assessment update to ensure that new development doesn’t harm the environment.

As for dredging the shoreline, Caughlan said it poses little natural threat because the reservoir itself is a man-made lake.

Plus, if campsites were to be added, they would be confined to existing campgrounds.

“We’re not trying to disperse camping,” Caughlan said. “We are not trying to take those high-density recreation areas and spread them out. We want to keep the reservoir as natural-feeling as possible and to keep the impacts of those larger areas down.”

Officials have collected about 2,000 public comments through online questionnaires and at public meetings. They’ll work to develop alternative proposals to the ones presented in August, and they’ll host public workshops to comment on the alternatives in November. They’ll also open up a third online questionnaire.

Then, they’ll move into the next phase and draft plans. This phase will include public meetings and an online questionnaire, as well as a public review period.

In March and April, the final phase, they’ll finalize and present the plans and host public hearings.

The campsites, at this point, are a mere suggestion.

“You don’t go to these meetings with a blank slate,” Caughlan said of the public meetings in August. “As managers of the properties, we get a sense of what the park needs and what the visitors want. We put out some ideas.”

The completed master plan won’t materialize until mid-2017.

“We run into the same problem as every park across the Front Range: capacity issues,” Caughlan said. “Horsetooth Mountain trailhead is full at 10 o’clock on a weekend day. It’s full, and we’re turning people away. So the question is — we had to expand those park areas — but how big do we make them and not damage the resources? These master plans address all these issues.”

Besides campsites, officials proposed plans that included:

- Improving and expanding launch areas in the Inlet Bay Marina
- Updating Satanka Bay to accommodate new uses such as paddleboarding
- Improving climbing access to Duncan’s Ridge, Torture Chamber and Scoop on the east side of the reservoir
- Connecting South Bay and Inlet Bay with a new hiking and biking trail

About 90 percent of the projects that made the cut in the 2007 master plan have since been implemented, including adding the new swim beach on the east side of the reservoir, camper services buildings at the campgrounds and the new visitor center near the entrance to South Bay.

The visitor center opened to the public Monday but will have a grand opening ceremony in the spring.

Larimer County officials are completing the Larimer County Reservoir Parks Master Plan and The Ranch Events Complex Master Plan during on the same timeline.

For more information on both plans, visit onegreatcountytoplay.com.

[#NoCoAsk is a newsroom experiment](#). We want to involve the Northern Colorado community in the newsgathering process more often and be more transparent. By asking questions and voting for story ideas, you have more say in the news we produce. We'll even invite you to join us throughout the reporting process, so you can learn more about how we do what we do.

If you want to vote in the next #NoCoAsk poll and have a say in the next story in the series, visit noconow.co/2d7Cq2w.

Planning Process

- Phase 1: Foundation, June 2016 — stakeholder interviews and online questionnaire No. 1
- Phase 2: Visioning, July-August 2016 — public scoping meetings and online questionnaire No. 2
- Phase 3: Alternatives, September-November 2016 — alternatives public workshops and online questionnaire No. 3
- Phase 4: Draft Plans, December 2016-March 2017 — draft plan public meetings, public review period online questionnaire No. 4
- Phase 5: Final Plans, March-April 2017 — final plan presentations and public hearings



Wickstrom: Horsetooth Reservoir often voted one of the best fishing waters in Western U.S.



Denver Post file

Colorado Kayak Fishing Club member Chris Lee makes use of a pedal-powered trolling technique as he makes his way across Horsetooth Reservoir in Larimer County.

If you follow my shows, you know I am often “on assignment” traveling the world searching for the best fishing spots to share with you. Mark Caughlan from Larimer County Parks joined the show on Saturday to remind me that there is a pretty good fishing spot not far from my house.

Horsetooth Reservoir’s boat landing is about five miles from the driveway where I park my boat. Not only is it close, but Horsetooth is often voted one of the best fishing waters in the Western United States.

Located just west of Fort Collins, six and one-half miles of water beckon visitors to come out and play at Horsetooth Reservoir. Surrounded by 1,900 acres of public lands, this reservoir has it all: fishing, boating, camping, picnicking, swimming, scuba diving, rock climbing, and water skiing. Of course I love to focus on the fishing.

While the fishing can be very good throughout the year, it can really shine in the fall. Several years of high water and a resurgence of bait fish have produced not only a variety of species, but large healthy fish. Most anglers target the reservoir for the walleyes and smallmouth bass, but there is a great population of very large trout (rainbows up to ten pounds) and prolific numbers of panfish, including perch and sunfish. The perch have really rebounded with the high water. They are easy to catch and great eating.

The bass and walleye fishing will still be the major draw this fall. As the bait fish school up the predators will congregate around them. This concentration of fish can make for incredible angling once you locate them. Remember things are changing and the fish will not be where you caught them this summer. The water is actually rising in Horsetooth and the water temperatures are falling. Once you locate the fish, a jigging spoon or blade bait can produce steady action and some very big fish. If you don't have a boat you can do very well from shore but you may have to do some walking.

While Horsetooth is an easy day trip, if you want to stay there, they have great camping facilities that are open year round including not only a variety of campsites but camper cabins and a refurbished upscale Airstream trailer they rent out.

Caughlan said the current plan is to keep the boat ramp open until the end of November. However days and hours may vary so be sure and check the website for current hours of operation. Because it typically doesn't freeze, you can fish Horsetooth from shore, a kayak or float tube year round. Caughlan also mentioned that with kids back in school, the weather cooling and the Broncos playing the reservoir is not crowded and the fish are not being pressured making for some great outings. The guys at [Fishful Thinker](#) spend a lot of time on Horsetooth and are a great source of information on current fishing conditions.

As part of the Colorado-Big Thompson Project to divert water from the west slope to the east slope for drinking water, irrigation, hydropower generation, the reservoir is jointly operated by the Bureau of Reclamation and the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District who manage water levels for irrigation, municipal, and industry use. Larimer County manages recreation water.

Horsetooth Reservoir requires entrance, camping permits and is open year round. It's located west of Fort Collins at an elevation of 5,420 feet

For more information on Horsetooth Reservoir can be found on [website of Larimer County](#). The full interview with Caughlan is available below.



New Horsetooth Reservoir information center opens

[Stephen Meyers](#) , stephenmeyers@coloradoan.com 8:56 p.m. MDT September 29, 2016



(Photo: Stephen Meyers/The Coloradoan)

Visitors to Horsetooth Reservoir now have a one-stop location to purchase park passes, make camping reservations and chat with park rangers about the best hiking and mountain biking trails in the Fort Collins area.

The Horsetooth Area Information Center opened Monday at the reservoir's South Bay, capping a decade of improvements to [Horsetooth Reservoir](#). Horsetooth district manager Mark Caughlan calls the

information center the "front door" to Colorado's third-busiest reservoir, which attracts more than 1 million visitor days each year.

The two-story information center features a flat-screen TV showing the day's reservoir conditions, permit and camping prices and a live feed to the parking lot webcam at busy Horsetooth Mountain Open Space. Larimer County staff and rangers are available to talk face to face with visitors, sharing information not only about Horsetooth Reservoir but all area recreation sites, including open spaces, natural areas and Lory State Park.

"We haven't had that central location for people to meet and get their questions answered," Caughlan said. "People want to know where they can fish, hunt and shoot. Where they can go climbing or mountain biking."

Located between South Bay's camping and day-use areas, the information center is one of three new buildings that will serve as office space, workshops and maintenance and storage facilities for about 60 Larimer County park rangers, trail crew staff and administration staff who previously worked out of modular buildings for years. Funding for the \$5.4 million project came from Larimer County's open space tax, park funds and Colorado lottery funds.

The information center is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. seven days a week until Nov. 1, when it will close on weekends until mid-March. Larimer County will host a grand opening of the information center next spring. An interactive 3D map and other interpretive displays will be installed in the coming months.



The new visitors center at Horsetooth Reservoir opened Monday at the South Bay entrance. (Photo: Chelsae Ketchum/The Coloradoan)

Entrance fees to the reservoir are \$7 for daily and \$75 for an annual permit for county residents. Campsites range from \$15 to \$30 nightly during the slow season, from October through March.

The Satanka boat ramp closes for the season Friday, while boat ramp hours at South Bay and Inlet Bay change to 8 a.m. to 4

p.m. through Oct. 30.

For information, call the Horsetooth Area Information Center at 970-498-5610.



A digital display at the Horsetooth Area Information Center shows the day's weather and water conditions, park permit passes and a live-cam to Horsetooth Mountain Open Space's parking lot. (Photo: Stephen Meyers/The Coloradoan)

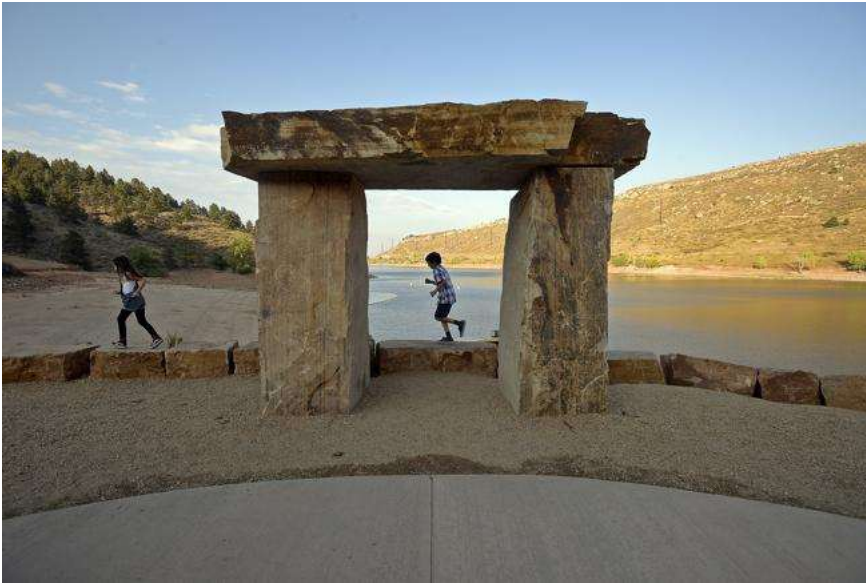
REPORTER-HERALD

Larimer County fetes 20 years of open space tax, 25 to come

More than 50,000 acres of land have been preserved through tax

By Pamela Johnson, Reporter-Herald Staff Writer

POSTED: 09/22/2016 07:52:19 PM MDT



Cate Donnelly, 8, left, and her brother Teddy Donnelly, 10, play on the rocks Thursday at Horsetooth Reservoir in Fort Collins during a celebration to honor all the land that has been preserved, upgrades paid for and programs held in the 20 years of the Help Preserve Open Spaces tax. Teddy and Cate came with their dad, Larimer County Commissioner Tom Donnelly, to the event, which was hosted by the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources. (Jenny Sparks / Loveland Reporter-Herald)



Kelly Ohlson, left, chats with Larimer County Commissioner Tom Donnelly Thursday during a celebration of 20 years of the Help Preserve Open Spaces tax at Horsetooth Reservoir in Fort Collins. Ohlson was one of the people who originally spearheaded the open space tax. (Jenny Sparks / Loveland Reporter-Herald)

As residents gathered to celebrate more than 50,000 acres of preserved land through an open space sales tax, Kerri Rollins shared what she described as a very fitting proverb.

"The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago," the director of Larimer County's open lands program quoted Thursday at

an event to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the citizen-approved sales tax that launched the county efforts.

"The second best time is now."

Those words have remained relevant through time much like Larimer County's program to preserve lands for their beauty, for habitat, for recreation, for agriculture, for history and for posterity.

Voters in 1995 approved a quarter-cent sales tax to be shared by Larimer County and all of the cities and towns within the county to preserve open space. The tax was hard fought by a small group of citizens who came up against a tough, well-funded opposition.

But, after a failed election in 1994, they won the second time around.

And that tax, which began being collected in 1996, launched Larimer County's open space program that has preserved more than 44,000 acres with an \$84 million investment.

Many of those open spaces provide recreation, trails and wildlife viewing to residents, while other areas simply protect the land, and others preserve the county's agricultural tradition and rich history.

"You really can't describe the beauty of our open spaces," Commissioner Steve Johnson said in a 20th anniversary video debuted at the event.

"It's something you have to see."

Overall, the tax has brought in \$188.5 million, which is shared between Larimer County and its cities and towns, all of which work together to preserve land. The entities work each other, with land protection agencies and with Great Outdoors Colorado to protect lands, to manage them and to run educational and community efforts, all supported by the tax.

And those programs and efforts allowed the entities to leverage their tax money into grants to protect even more land. In fact, Larimer County ranks second in the state, just behind Routt County, in grants from Great Outdoors Colorado to help with land preservation efforts. Together, the cities, towns and county have tallied 174 grants for \$53.7 million in lottery money.

Voters extended the sales tax in 1999, and then in 2014, approved another 25 years by a landslide 82 percent vote.

This, officials said, illustrates the community support that led to the tax in the first place, which supported 20 years of open space that includes everything from meadows to mountains, reservoirs to rivers and so much more and that brings smiles to the residents who enjoy the great outdoors surrounding them.

These lands are special places that thousands of people see and breathe in every year, resources that 75 percent of the county population enjoys.

And now, with another 25 years of the tax, Larimer County will begin protecting land for the next decades and for new generations to love and play.

Kelly Ohlson and Linda Stanley, two of the three community members who spearheaded the original tax, stressed that, while now is a time to celebrate, it is also a time to keep the momentum going for the future.

"The next 10 years are critical," said Ohlson. "With the rapid growth and the development going on, it's a small window. (The tax money) needs to go to land. It needs to go there now before it's too late.

"The time is now."